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Onions in Surplus

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

An interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, August 10, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company's Blue Network.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Now, Ruth Van Deman, it's time we were hearing you about using onions. How do you think the cooks of the country feel about all these onions?

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Very pleased I think, Wallace. You know there's an old rhyme that says---

"This is every cook's opinion
No savory dish without an onion."

KADDERLY:

"Every cook's opinion"---well, I didn't know it was quite that unanimous.

VAN DEMAN:

Of course you have to allow a poet some license.

KADDERLY:

I wasn't questioning it for myself. I even belong to that plebeian school of those who eat their onions raw.

VAN DEMAN:

You wouldn't agree then---

"Lest your social prestige should be spoil'd
Every onion must be thoroughly boil'd."

KADDERLY:

No, ma'am, I wouldn't. When onions and social prestige collide---if they ever do---you'll find me on the side with the raw onion.

VAN DEMAN:

You'll find yourself in very good company---standing shoulder to shoulder with the nutrition experts.

KADDERLY:

They eat their onions raw too, do they?

VAN DEMAN:

That's the way to get all the food values of an onion, they say---including that elusive vitamin C that tends to vanish when an onion's cooked.

But I wasn't thinking about food values just that minute, Wallace. I was wondering how onion sandwiches would strike you.

(over)

KADDERLY:

Don't wonder. Just produce the sandwiches and you'll see.

VAN DEMAN:

Then I am safe in putting down, as Use No. 1, raw onion sandwiches for hikes and picnics---

KADDERLY:

Entirely. And what about those dozen or so recipes for cooking onions you offered one time last year on that broadcast with Mike Rowell?

VAN DEMAN:

They're still going strong.

KADDERLY:

Good. Then I'd like to renew that offer in a few minutes, if that's agreeable to the Bureau of Home Economics.

VAN DEMAN:

Perfectly. And there's this point about several of those combinations just now. They call for other foods on the list officially declared in surplus.

For instance, stewed or scalloped onions and tomatoes. That's a very happy combination from the standpoint of flavor, and food value--

KADDERLY:

And supply. There's still an abundance of fresh red, ripe tomatoes in many places.

VAN DEMAN:

Or for something a little out of the ordinary, there are baked stuffed onions with cooked navy beans or Boston baked beans. They take a little time to prepare. But they're very attractive on a vegetable plate, combining as they do protein and pungency.

KADDERLY:

Speaking of pungency plus, I like that onion soup with the toast and the grated cheese floating on top.

VAN DEMAN:

Summer or winter, men always call for that.

KADDERLY:

No wonder, a bowl of that onion soup's practically a meal---and it's so good, so rich, so full of flavor.

VAN DEMAN:

It's easy enough to make---it's just meat broth mixed with sliced onions, cooked first in fat until they turn yellow and transparent. Then of course the soup's simmered down until the onions are tender and soft. And there's a little flour added for thickening---just enough to keep the soup from being too soupy. The toast and grated cheese on top are an idea we've borrowed from the French.

KADDERLY:

I'm all for more of that brand of international cooperation.

VAN DEMAN:

Then you approve of Spanish rice made with plenty of onions.

KADDERLY:

I do, highly.

VAN DEMAN:

Made in the true Spanish or Mexican style it is highly seasoned with chili peppers and other spices. Another much simpler version is plain boiled rice with a savory onion sauce. And incidentally, rice is another of the foods in surplus.

KADDERLY:

Yes, we'll be having a special broadcast on rice some day soon.

VAN DEMAN:

And now back to the raw onion again---

KADDERLY:

I didn't think we quite did justice to that subject.

VAN DEMAN:

No, we didn't even mention salads.

KADDERLY:

And after all, what would a salad be without onion.

VAN DEMAN:

Wallace, I'm trying to keep a middle-of-the-road course here. You know some people want no more than the faintest suspicion---just a something that can't even be identified as onion---what you get by a quick rub of the salad bowl with a cut onion, or by letting the vinegar for the salad dressing stand with a slice of onion in it. And then there are those who want their onion so they can see it.

KADDERLY:

Again I'm willing to go on record as belonging to that school. I want to see the onion.

VAN DEMAN:

Then you'd like an honest-to-onion salad of chopped cabbage with slices of the succulent onion laid over all, and a vinegar and oil dressing with bits of bacon broken up in it.

KADDERLY:

I would. -- you bet.

VAN DEMAN:

And did you every try sliced orange and onion rings with watercress or crisp lettuce?

KADDERLY:

Now that's getting a little too, too---

VAN DEMAN:

No, it isn't nearly so odd as it sounds. The tartness and juiciness of the orange, just like the tartness and juiciness of the tomato, is a perfect foil for the onion.

KADDERLY:

All right, I'll try it sometime and report.

VAN DEMAN:

And may I add just a word about onions in pickles?

KADDERLY:

Very timely. This must be about the height of the home-made pickle season.

VAN DEMAN:

I won't go into the whys and hows today. But the Bureau of Home Economics has worked out standard directions for various pickle mixtures using onions, and for making the little white pickled onions with distilled vinegar.

KADDERLY:

And those are available on request along with the recipes for cooking onions?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, to anyone who likes onions or even thinks he might cultivate a taste for onions.

KADDERLY:

Very well.

Farm and Home Friends: by authority of Ruth Van Deman of our Bureau of Home Economics I assure you that a copy of the Bureau's onion recipes may be had for the asking. Also, the directions for making pickles in which onions are used. These are free.

Address your request to the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A., Washington, D. C. Ask for "onion recipes" and "homemade pickles".

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